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PREACHED IN THE

Church at Falmouth, Nova-Scotia,

On FRIDAY, the 10th of MAY, 1793.

BEING THE DAY APPOINTED BY PROCLAMATION

FOR A

GENERAL FAST

AND

Humiliation before Almighty God.

BY THE REVEREND WILLIAM COCHRAN,

PRESIDENT OF KING'S COLLEGE, WINDSOR.

HALIFAX:

Printed by JOHN HOWE, at his Printing-Office, opposite the
PARADE.

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TO
The Right Reverend Father in God
CHARLES,
BY DIVINE PERMISSION,
BISHOP OF NOVA-SCOTIA,
THIS DISCOURSE IS MOST HUMBLY INSCRIBED
BY
HIS DUTIFUL SON,
AND OBLIGED HUMBLE SERVANT,
WM. COCHRAN.

Windsor, Nova-Scotia, June 4, 1793.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Author of this Discourse sees in it many and considerable faults: And he has no doubt but readers more judicious and impartial than himself will discover many more. For these, he hopes, it may be some excuse, that, from unavoidable circumstances it was composed in haste; part of it, on the morning of the day on which it was preached: So that time did not permit him to read it over twice; much less to give it any material correction.

SHOULD any one think it worth while to ask why a performance, acknowledged so imperfect, is suffered to be printed, he has only this to say, that the majority of the people under his pastoral care were prevented by the remoteness of their situation from being present when it was delivered; and he is willing to let them read what they had not an opportunity to hear.

NOR does he deny that he embraces with pleasure any fair occasion of letting it be known in what abhorrence he holds those principles, both in religion and politics, the miserable effects whereof he has here endeavoured to paint.

JEREMIAH v. 9.

Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

WHILE we are running with inconsiderate haste in pursuit of the vanities of this world—pleasure, wealth, power, and honours; and striving with our neighbours, whether they or we shall obtain the greater share of such things, we are very apt to forget, that there is another race, wherein we should be more anxious *so to run that we may obtain the prize*.—That it may be unspeakably more our interest to *seek treasures in Heaven*; which may be acquired by all without injuring or provoking each other; and in their own hands are not subject to waste or decay, but preserve their value undiminished for ever.

As it is with individuals, in this respect, so is it usually with Kingdoms and States. They are employed in the same unprofitable pursuits, and contests with each other: And if they have been successful in these, are but too ready to *say in their prosperity that they shall never be moved, since the Lord by his favour hath made their mountain to stand strong*.

For both, therefore, it is highly necessary to check this immoderate eagerness, by withdrawing at certain seasons from the ordinary occupations of life; to consider seriously the end that is proposed, and the means used to attain it; to humble the pride of man's foolish and overweening heart before Him who formed it from the dust; and to mortify the vehemence of sensual appetites, by denying them, for a time, even harmless gratifications.

Particular persons must determine for themselves the properest time of performing this duty; but public humiliations of a whole community must be appointed by public authority: And by that authority we have been this day called together,—to implore pardon for our sins, and the blessing of the Almighty on our King and Country; which I trust all who hear me have done with that devotion and fervency that they ought.

I hope it cannot be deemed unsuitable to this very solemn occasion, or to the words I have chosen for my text, to consider

1. Whether it be reasonable it itself, and agreeable to experience, that God should visit nations for their sins.
2. Whether there be not now marks of a divine visitation in the world. And
3. What effect this should have on our opinions and lives.

The way of God's dealing with individuals and with nations is somewhat different. As this present life is but a small part of our whole existence, there is no necessity that rewards or punishments should be allotted here to each particular person in exact proportion to the goodness or badness of his actions. Because it is enough towards vindicating divine justice if *somewhere* each is sure of receiving what is his due. Good men, therefore, may be oppressed in this life, and wicked men may prosper, (as really often happens) without any imputation against the justice of God's government; since all will be abundantly set right hereafter: So that no one will have reason, on the whole, to esteem his existence the happier for his sins; nor any one reason, to regret, that he chose to be afflicted for a season, rather than to part with his integrity.

But as to Kingdoms, and States, the whole of their existence is here. All such distinctions will cease when Christ shall reign over all; *and there shall be one Flock and one Shepherd*. If, then, the holiness of God's nature, and the honour of his laws, will not suffer iniquity unrepented of to pass unpunished; nor virtue to be unrewarded: And if nations, as such, have no existence but in this present world, *here* their rewards and punishments must be. They must be visited *here*, or not at all.

God hath taken various ways both by Nature and Revelation to shew us the duty of union among ourselves; and that independence of each other is a vain notion, impracticable in itself, and displeasing to our Maker. For this purpose He hath implanted in us several propensities and affections that cannot be gratified so long as we remain solitary. He hath assured us that *when two or three are gathered together in his name*, He will be in the midst of them, to bless them. He has taught us to pray, not each in behalf of himself only, but to *our Father which is in Heaven*, for common blessings on ourselves and all mankind. And (to give no
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more instances; He seems even in this of his national visitations to point out the connection which He intended should subsist between man and man.

For we can hardly deny, that our Creator might if He pleased, without any departure from the unalterable laws of his nature, punish or reward individuals, even in this life, in exact proportion to their conduct, whether public or private, without involving others in the consequences. But to shew us, in all ways, that we have an interest in each other; and to engage us, even on principles of selfishness, to promote among our neighbours a love for piety and virtue, He chooses to punish a general violation of these by general calamities.

And indeed we find all history bearing witness, that almost every nation has been prosperous while virtuous; and that after they had corrupted their ways they have decayed or totally perished. Not only the Jews were whilst they continued to be a people, and are still, in their dispersion, at the present day, a notorious evidence of this truth; but heathen nations, also, both were, and confessed themselves to be examples of the same: Nay the ruin and desolation of many amongst them would proclaim it, whether they confessed it or no. For where is now that mighty BABYLON? *She that hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunken?—Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed.—O thou that dwellest upon many waters thy end is come. And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations, but thou shalt be desolate for ever.* And so literally was God's threatened judgment fulfilled, that travellers cannot now discover where that magnificent residence of Luxury and Vice hath stood.

TYRE, also, whose wealth and trade surpassed all that was elsewhere seen in the earth—*Whose merchants were PRINCES—when the multitude of her merchandize filled the midst of her with violence; and she sinned, was cast as profane out of the mountain of God.*

And ROME herself, whose dominion grew to a wonderful extent in the days of her simplicity and virtue; whom God used as the instrument of his vengeance on the rebellious Jews; When she gave herself up to pride and profligacy, was ruined by a train of circumstances as unexpected and unaccountable (unless we confess them the judgments of Heaven) as her rise and progress had been.

I would far exceed the limits I have designed for this whole discourse, were I to recite all the passages that are to be found

found, as well in the Holy Scriptures as in heathen writers, acknowledging and proving the interposition of Providence; both to punish and reward the nations of the earth according to their deeds. Nor can it be necessary: For this is a truth which the general consent of mankind hath admitted. Excepting only a few professors of *Science falsely so called*, who would attribute the whole to *second causes*: Not considering how many of the transactions alluded to no human sagacity could, on this supposition, unravel: And, moreover, that whether God works his purpose by a *second*, a third, or a fourth cause, it is equally God that works all the while. But such men look only to the instrument: To them *the arm of the Lord* that wields it *hath not been revealed*.

But let us, my Brethren, cultivate more humble and devout dispositions. Let us endeavour to improve by the awful judgments that have fallen on past ages. But particularly let us strive to *discern the Signs of these present times*, that we may *flee from the wrath to come*. For this purpose we shall now proceed

2. To consider whether there be not now evident marks of a divine visitation in the world.

Under this head I do not mean to dwell, (for time will not permit) on that spirit of discontent and turbulence; that desire of unsettling ancient habits; that disposition to quit the slow but sure ways of sober industry, and to rush into new adventures—which are in themselves curses of no light nature and infallibly lead to others tenfold more severe; and which, notwithstanding, now seem to have infected a considerable part of mankind. But I will only draw your attention to the present miserable situation of France—A country whose desperate attack on our dearest rights might well provoke us, but whose excessive sufferings are enough to draw compassion from the bitterest enemies it ever had.

The people, of whom I speak, were but lately, as a nation, very flourishing and powerful; but they had amongst them many crying abuses and corruptions: And it may not be altogether useless to notice a few of the principal ones; that we may see how naturally (such is the wise appointment of God) their sufferings have grown out of their sins.

In the first place, then, the established religion of the country was deformed by many and grievous errors; and their public worship was superstitious and absurd in the extreme. Their doctrines of transubstantiation, and purgato-

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ry ; of the priest's absolution ; and the Pope's infallibility ; Their adoration of images ; their invocation of Saints and Angels ; their pomps and processions ; their innumerable childish and ridiculous ceremonies have been fully and unanswerably exposed, not only by the ornaments of our Church, but by many writers in their own nation. In addition to these things, of which we can speak with certainty, it has been said by foreigners, and lamented among themselves, that the morals of their clergy were exceedingly depraved. That their houses called convents, instead of being nurseries of piety, as their well meaning founders designed, had become scenes of the most intemperate excesses.

Secondly, their Government was of that sort which Englishmen never have endured, and I hope never will—Namely, an arbitrary monarchy ; where the King made laws by his single authority, or put his will in the place of law, and every body was obliged to obey it. We may well judge how often such unlimited power would tempt the best disposed man to abuse it ; and what a scourge it would prove in the hand of the wicked. Accordingly the interests of that great nation, and the repose of Europe have, on occasions, been sacrificed to the humour of a concubine. The enmity of such a one might shut up in prison the most virtuous man in the kingdom ; where he might linger to death without any possible means of deliverance, unless by supplications for such a woman's mercy.

Thirdly, under such a government and such religion we cannot suppose that good morals would be cultivated among the body of the people. Even decency is said to have been laid aside, and the most detestable crimes against nature itself to have been committed without blushing.—*And shall I not visit for these things ? saith the Lord : And shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this ?*—God forbid, however, that any here should be so uncharitable as to think, that there were not many, very many amongst them, who did not come under this description, and even were adorned with the truest Christian virtues. But such were the sins of the nation, and let us now see what national consequences followed them.

When men of talents and extensive information turned their attention to the nature of their government and religious establishment, they could not well avoid being disgusted with both. But it was safer to attack the Church than the State ; against this therefore they turned the force of

their wit and learning; finding (God knows) too ample scope for all the ridicule they poured on it. From this source has broke out that impure torrent of unbelievers and atheists who are at this day the disgrace of human nature, and the instruments of God's signal vengeance on the nation that produced them. For seeing the impositions and mummeries that were practised among themselves, through contempt of these; through pride of reason unused to judge for itself; and, I fear, still more from the licentiousness of their lives, they were induced to esteem religion itself no more than imposition and mummery too.

Those in authority generally having little religion themselves, seemed to care but little how it was treated by others: THEIR *mountain*, they thought, *stood strong*. Not aware that government can have no safe foundation but on virtue: And virtue none but on piety.

However one step they took which brought on their ruin apace; and it is an instance above all I have mentioned yet,—indeed above most of what history records,—that God often makes the sins and follies of mankind their own avengers. Tempted by ambition, or envy of England's prosperity and glory, when unfortunate troubles arose between that country and her colonies, the Rulers of France rendered them incurable by aiding the Revolters with an armed force: Under no better pretence than that of being the defenders of civil liberty against acts of power, which, if allowed in the most aggravated degree that they were ever complained of, would not be a *drop of water in the bucket* against the enormous oppression that prevailed among themselves.

And is it possible (every man of reflection will be inclined to say)—Is it possible that the Ministers of an arbitrary King, who used to boast of their policy and foresight beyond others, should send his fleets and armies into the bosom of a country nurtured up in the most perfect freedom?—Send them (as they said) to fight for the liberties of others, and yet expect, that the officers and soldiers employed in such service would never inquire what liberty they enjoyed at home? Yes, thus blind were these mighty politicians;—these *wise men that gloried in their wisdom*: *Who said, by the strength of my hand have I done it, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent: And I have removed the bounds of the people; and have robbed their treasure; and I have put down their inhabitants like a valiant man: And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: And as one gathereth eggs that*

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are left, have I gathered all the earth. And they thought there would be none to move the wing, or open the mouth.

But how far they were mistaken, the downfall of that system, under which they held and abused their power, quickly proved. The very men who had been sent to support the revolt of the British colonies, were the first to rise against the Monarchy of France. And happy would it have been for that devoted country, had they been content with redressing the manifold abuses of their government, and obtaining a reasonable security for their liberty in future: But they proudly rejected the excellent model which our constitution held out to them, imagining impracticable schemes of their own; abolishing the efficiency of Royal power, and every distinction of rank and wealth; and teaching the populace that *they* are every thing.

Another, and another set of Rulers (or rather ROBBERS) succeed these, each more desperate and flagitious than the preceding. They instigated a brutal mob to murder those who would not support their abominable system: They confiscated the possessions of such as escaped their fury; and left them and their wives and children to beg their bread in a strange land: They plundered the Church of its lawful property; cast out the greatest ornaments of the Clergy, and introduced to the sacred offices of religion the basest and most vicious of the people. Finally, they led captive from his palace a mild and gracious King, whose person they had sworn to keep inviolate: Prescribed him limits he should not pass: Dragged him back, and cast him into rigorous confinement, for attempting to fly from them; although they had solemnly declared it to be the right of the meanest person in the country to quit it when he pleased.

But how shall I attempt to paint the horrid transactions that have followed! An amiable Monarch brought to be judged in mock trial, before an impious crew of his vilest subjects:—Most unjustly condemned to death:—Denied the poor boon of disposing of his remains as he wished; the short space of *three days*, to prepare his soul for the world to come.

How shall we attend him in his last visit to his wretched wife and helpless son! His wife, no more a Queen:—Once his partner on as splendid a throne as the world beheld; now lying on a bed of straw, bereft of reason by the weight of his calamities and her own.—His infant son, just able to comprehend the miserable fate of his father, but of too tender years to be able to bear it.

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But let us turn from the prison to the less distressing scene, the closing one of this dismal tragedy :—See this excellent Prince mount the scaffold with firm step, and that dignified composure, which he derived from his innocence and Christian virtues.—See him refused the privilege, which we grant to the worst malefactors, to speak a few words to the people in defence of his character ; for his life he had no hopes (indeed, I suppose at that time no desire) to save.—See him hurried rudely to the block :—And the fatal stroke at last put an end to his cruel sufferings ; whilst thousands of *Fiends* shouted for joy, and pressed to dip their pikes and daggers in his blood !—*Shall I not visit for these things ? saith the Lord : And shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this.*

Alas ! his vengeance is already sufficiently upon them. Their land is full of distraction and civil bloodshed. Their armies are discomfited and beaten back : The hosts of enemies whom they have provoked are advancing upon them from all sides : The elements combine to destroy their fleets : And dreadful famine seems ready to devour them. Yet *the people turneth not unto him that smiteth : Neither will they seek the Lord of Hosts. They have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return.*

Every new defeat they are told of, the populace cry louder for the blood of their harmless fellow-citizens. And in the midst of all this their Convention sit hearing speeches to disprove the being of God ! Nay a very small number, who did not well endure such impiety, were publicly hooted out of their presence, with bursts of laughter and unspeakable contempt !!

What sufferings still await them for this dreadful impenitence, it is not for us to determine. God grant they may be as light as the nature of their case will admit. Our part is (which was the third and last thing I proposed) to consider what effect these things ought to have on our own conduct and opinions.

We read in the history of our blessed Lord, that some persons told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices ; and *Jesus answering, said unto them, suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered these things ? I tell you nay : but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

In this answer our duty, on the present occasion, is clearly enough laid down. When an individual or nation has fallen
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under the visitation of God, we ought not to conclude that such are peculiarly wicked, merely *because they suffered these things*. They may have been sent for wholesome correction ; for trial of their faith ; for a call to others, as much as to themselves. But we should begin with the sins, and be sure that they exist, before we explain their sufferings by them. And even then, we are in no wise to think, that he of course is the greatest sinner, who has the greatest share of the sufferings ; for oftentimes *whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth most*. But aboveall, we should treasure up our Saviour's conclusion,—*except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish*. Let us not compare man with man, or nation with nation : *To their own Master let them stand or fall*. But particularly let us not compare them with ourselves ; for it would be dangerous to Christian humility. But let us compare ourselves with our duty, as taught by our conscience and the Gospel of Christ. We will then probably find too much to give us reasonable dread of God's displeasure ; and let us remember that if we do not avert it by timely repentance we *shall all likewise perish*.

Our sins may not be of so public and notorious a sort as those I have been describing ; but much iniquity may have been committed in secret, and whether it be in the face of the sun, or in the depths of the earth, *your sin will find you out*. We may not have been guilty of the very same crimes, or in the very same degree, with those on whom the hand of Heaven now lies so heavy ; but we may have done things as bad of another kind, and know that wilful sin, of every sort and every degree, deserveth the wrath of God.

It is true, our Legislators and Magistrates do not openly scoff at the existence of God ; but do they always honour Him as they ought ? Do they constantly attend his public worship, and sacraments ? Do they reverence the day set apart for his service, and teach others to do so by their example ? Or do they convert it into a day of business and journies, in defiance of the laws they have themselves enacted, or are appointed to execute ?

And as to the bulk of the people, though perhaps they be not chargeable with that seditious spirit and ferocious cruelty which I have noticed in others, are they equally free from idleness, drunkenness, profaneness, and impurity,—dreadful sins of themselves, and such as lead directly to others as bad as can be practised in any country ?

And do we not fear that the Lord will visit us for these things ?

things? His sword is drawn : His avenging Angel is abroad. How far they may reach we do not know ; but this we know, that all those evils which others suffer *we too richly have deserved*. Let us therefore, as the only means to prevent the blow, *get us to our God right humbly*. Let us say with the prophet, and shew it in our lives, *when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness*.

This is the first and principal lesson which the events we have been reviewing should teach us. Another, and of no little importance (with which I shall conclude) is,—to be duly thankful for some advantages we enjoy above other nations, and careful to use them as we ought.

If the calamities which have fallen upon our enemies—(alas ! they are bitterer enemies to themselves)—have flowed, in a great measure, from the corruptions of the national Church, and the vices of its priests, how grateful should we be, who have a pure and Apostolic religion established among us, and a Clergy, generally speaking, of exemplary lives.

We on our part should endeavour to be, both in our lives and doctrines, *a burning and a shining light* ; warned by the fate of others not to *put confidence in Princes* alone, although we have now a truly religious one to support us. You, on the other hand, should give us a reasonable share of goodwill and respect, *for our work's sake* ; should be candid in your estimation of our conduct, and even indulgent to what are really but foibles. At least you should not give a willing ear to unauthenticated stories* against us, knowing that many falsehoods will be propagated by the enemies of our Church in particular, or of religion in general ; and convinced, from what has lately happened, that our spiritual enemy never can have a more hopeful method of prevailing than

* Of this sort we have had a recent instance. A report has been industriously spread, and by many simple people believed, that a design was formed to introduce the payment of *Tithes* in this Province. Several circumstances relative to this matter were invented and propagated ; all which were absolutely false, and totally unfounded. A similar report, I am informed, was circulated through the old Colonies, previous to the late Rebellion and Revolt ; and it is now revived, either to prejudice people against the Church of England, or to poison their minds with discontent and sedition. I am authorised to declare, that the Prelate who now presides over the Established Church in this Province, and I might add, that its other leading members, would, to the utmost of their power, discourage and oppose so wild a project, were any one absurd enough to propose it. Listening to this report therefore, or whispering it round, without even the shadow of proof to support it, only indicates a mind inclining to disaffection, and unfriendly to peace and our happy Constitution.

than, through infidels or others, to bring the national priesthood under the people's contempt.

Finally : If another great cause of the evils which have fallen on our enemies was the tyrannical nature of their government, we should be heartily thankful, that we live under such a happy constitution, that every man can repose with safety *under his vine, and under his fig tree*. A happy and envied Constitution ! The only one on earth that has been able, in such a degree, to restrain the insolence of the Great, and the licentiousness of the Mean ;—to save the Poor from oppression, and the Rich from being plundered ; in a word, to give that complete protection to all that every man holds dear, which is the truest liberty and freedom :—Liberty to do all that is right ; freedom from all that is wrong.

This inestimable blessing we should esteem as precious as our lives ; and defend it at the peril both of life and fortune, when invaded by foreign or domestic enemies. And we should daily send up our supplications for him, who hath long approved himself the faithful guardian of so precious a trust,—our gracious King, the revered FATHER OF HIS COUNTRY : That, by Heaven's blessing on his righteous arms, we may be enabled *to lead a quiet and peaceable life ; as his piety and virtue teach us to spend it in all godliness and honesty*.

May the *King of Kings* preserve him, and *crown him with glory and great worship*.—AMEN.

FINIS.